

RUTH FIRST EDUCATIONAL TRUST

Charity No. 1019975

Trustees: Barbara Ewin (Treasurer), Cheryl McEwan (Secretary), Lotte Shankland, John Tierney, Michael Thompson (Chairman).

Patrons: Bill Bryson (Chancellor of the University of Durham), Prof. Christopher Higgins (Vice-Chancellor of the University of Durham), Gillian Slovo (writer, daughter of Ruth First).

School of Modern Languages & Cultures, University of Durham, Durham DH1 3JT
m.p.thompson@durham.ac.uk

ANNUAL REPORT 2010-11

The aims of the Trust are:

- To enable southern African students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds to undertake postgraduate study at the University of Durham.
- To educate and inform students and staff at the University, as well as residents of the area, about educational and development issues in southern Africa.
- To raise funds to support these activities.

Southern Africa is defined for this purpose as comprising the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

This report gives details of activities undertaken by the Trust in the year ending 31 July 2011 in pursuit of these aims.

The Studentship in 2010-11

The Ruth First Scholar this year was Tinashe Ruswa, who is from Zimbabwe but took his first degree in South Africa. He took an MSc in Internet Systems & E-Business in the School of Engineering and Computing Sciences, which he passed with Distinction. His final project was to develop an online learning management system, which he tested with staff and students at the University of the Western Cape. He was a member of St Chad's College, which supports the Scholarship by providing subsidized accommodation. He is also a talented cricketer: he trained with the Northern Universities Student Club-Community Cricketers Elite and played for Norton Cricket Club on Teesside.

Tinashe has returned to South Africa and is exploring opportunities to continue his work on open learning technologies, including a partnership with UWC and an NGO to pilot his system at vocational training centres in the mining town of Klerksdorp. He also hopes to link this work with a PhD, ideally taken jointly at Durham and UWC. Tinashe's Ruth First webpage is at: <http://www.dur.ac.uk/ruthfirst.trust/ruswa.htm>.

The Studentship in 2011-12

Once again, a large number of applications were received from all over southern Africa. All the applications were made available to the shortlisting committee electronically, which allowed Bongani Ndimba in South Africa to contribute to the process, in consultation with former Ruth First Scholars. The shortlist was considered by the full executive committee at a selection meeting in May 2011, and the Scholarship was offered to Mr Pearson Nkhoma, who will take an MA in Social Work Studies in the School of Applied Social Sciences. Pearson is from Malawi. He arrived in Durham at the end of September 2011 and moved into St Chad's College accommodation at Trinity Hall. Further details about Pearson can be found on the Trust's website:

<http://www.dur.ac.uk/ruthfirst.trust/thisyear.htm>.

Past Ruth First Scholars

The 2007-08 Scholar, Peter Okeno Ong'are, is continuing his PhD at Durham on the role of music in processes of reconciliation and healing after conflict in Rwanda. He has continued to run Ngoma Vuma Uropa, the vocal and percussion group based in St Chad's College, which performed at the Banquets in 2009, 2010 and 2011, and in various venues around the University and the City.

Simplicio Bhebhe (2009-10) has been doing brave and important work in the defence of human rights in Zimbabwe. As a member of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, he has been involved in a number of legal challenges to abuses of authority by the Zimbabwean government and police. Information about all former Ruth First Scholars can be found on the RFET website: <http://www.dur.ac.uk/ruthfirst.trust/former.htm>.

Events

The annual banquet organized jointly with the Durham Palestine Educational Trust was held in February 2011. Delicious food was prepared by various volunteers from both Trusts, local businesses donated prizes for a raffle, and the auction of skills and services was deployed again with great success. Music was coordinated and led by Peter Okeno Ong'are, featuring the Durham Gamelan during the meal and African songs and drumming by Ngoma Vuma Uropa. The event was a great success, raising about £2000 for the Trust.

Cheryl McEwan once again took part in the Great North Run, raising £300 for the Trust. Mike Thompson and Tinashe Ruswa took part in the sponsored walk organized by the DPET and raised just under £500. Bill Bryson, Chris Higgins and Gillian Slovo, Ruth First's daughter, continue to be enthusiastic supporters of the Trust.

Finance

The accounts for 2010-11 will be tabled at the AGM by the Treasurer. They include a donation of £1000. The Trust is still covering part of the cost of Peter Ong'are's doctoral studies, which has contributed to a continuing deficit (although the most recent payment for his accommodation was delayed and does not appear in the 2010-11 accounts). A mailing to all University staff has recently been carried out, which has increased income from regular donations.

Annual grants are received from Durham County Council (£2000 per year) and the Durham Mineworkers' Association (£500 per year). We are very grateful to both bodies for this continuing support, to Councillors Grenville Holland and Mac Williams for their advice and timely interventions, to the University of Durham for its commitment to awarding tuition fee scholarships to Ruth First Scholars, to the Departments that provide teaching and supervision, and to St Chad's College for its valuable contribution to supporting and integrating the Scholar each year. The allowance paid to the Scholar and the payments to St Chad's for accommodation are administered through a Gift Agreement with the University, which can claim matching funds from the Funding Council.

24 November 2011

Mike Thompson

Chairman of the Trustees